

Claim Objection

Applicant notes that claim 1 is objectionable due to punctuation. Applicant has amended this claim to obviate this objection.

Renumbering Claims

Applicant notes that the Examiner has renumbered claims 3-17 as claims 2-16. PCT Administrative Instruction Section 205 explains that when a claim is cancelled there is no need to renumber the remaining claims. As such, the claim numbering should have remained as claims 1-17 with claim 2 cancelled, rather than claims 1-16.

Applicant requests that the original numbering of the claims be restored to prevent any confusion or errors during the prosecution of this application. To this end, Applicant's representative called the assigned Examiner regarding this matter on March 5, 2002. Applicant thanks the Examiner for his indication that the claims will be restored to their original numbering.

The Examiner should note that the Applicant has responded to the rejections based on the renumbered claims. Applicant has also referenced the original claims to clarify this matter and to assist in further prosecution, if required.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 16 (original claim 17) is rejected under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being indefinite. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection and request that it be withdrawn. Applicant submits that there is sufficient antecedent basis for "the

substrate” (see line 14 of original claim 17), “the buffer” (see line 3 of original claim 17), and the “alignment means” (see line 3 of original claim 17).

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-5, 9-10, and 13-15 (original claims 1, 3-6, 10-11, and 14-16) are rejected as being anticipated by Akimoto (US 5,803,932). Applicant respectfully traverses these claim rejections and requests that they be withdrawn because Akimoto fails to inherently or explicitly disclose each and every feature of the claimed invention.

Claim 1 details that the buffer mechanism is adapted to temporarily hold and pass the substrate to the alignment mechanism in such a manner that a center of the substrate is located on a rotational axis of the alignment mechanism. Furthermore, claim 1 details that the alignment mechanism is adapted to align the substrate to a predetermined direction by causing the substrate to rotate.

Applicant's submit that these features impart several advantages to the claimed invention over the prior art. The claimed invention will have less down time because the buffer mechanism is adapted to pass the substrate to the alignment mechanism so that the center of the substrate is located on the rotational axis of the alignment mechanism and because the alignment mechanism is adapted to align the substrate to a predetermined direction by causing the substrate. The claimed invention is more efficient and can perform the alignment process at a high rate of speed, thereby increasing the throughput of the claimed invention.

In contrast to the invention detailed in claim 1, the buffer mechanism of Akimoto (intermediate table part 41A) does not pass the held substrate to an alignment mechanism in such a manner that the center of the substrate is located on the rotational axis of the alignment mechanism.

Furthermore, Akimoto fails to suggest or disclose that the alignment mechanism (Office Action relies on Akimoto's convey mechanism part 42) aligns the substrate to a predetermined direction. Although, part 42 of Akimoto can move up and down and rotate, there is no disclosure that this part would properly rotate the substrate to a predetermined position. Although the centering of the substrate may possibly be accomplished by Akimoto, the alignment of the substrate can not.

Due to the foregoing, Applicant respectfully asserts that the invention detailed in claim 1 would not be considered anticipated or obvious by a person skilled in the art considering the cited Akimoto patent. Furthermore, Applicant submits that dependant claims 2-5 (original claims 3-6) are also not anticipated by Akimoto because they are dependant upon independent claim 1.

Regarding independent claim 9 (original claim 10), Akimoto fails to disclose the alignment means that performs an alignment process. Part 42 of Akimoto is a conveying means that has the ability to rotate, but the cited patent fails to disclose that the referenced part would perform an alignment process. The disclosure of Akimoto fails to teach or suggest this feature of the claimed invention, and does not properly anticipate claim 9.

Likewise, claims 10 and 13-15 (original claims 11 and 14-16) are also not anticipated by Akimoto because they depend from novel claim 9 (original claim 10).

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C § 103

Claims 6-8, 11, and 12 (original claims 7-9, 12, and 13) are rejected as obvious in light of Akimoto in further view of Somekh (US 5,643,366). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections and requests that they be withdrawn.

As discussed in regards of the anticipation rejection, claim 1 is novel and would not be considered obvious in light of Akimoto. Akimoto fails to teach or suggest all of the features detailed in independent claim 1. As such, Akimoto and Somekh fail to disclose all of the features of claims 6-8 (original claims 7-9) because these claims depend upon claim 1. Likewise, claims 11 and 12 (original claims 12 and 13) would also not be considered obvious in light of the cited patents due to claim 9 (original claim 10) not being obvious or anticipated based upon Akimoto.

Claim 16 (original claim 17) is rejected as obvious in light of Akimoto in combination of Ozawa (US 5,474,410). As discussed above, Applicant asserts that Akimoto fails to disclose all of the features of independent claim 9 (original claim 10). Therefore, one considering Akimoto and Ozawa would not find claim 16 (original claim 17) obvious because this claim is dependant upon independent claim 9 (original claim 10).

CONCLUSION

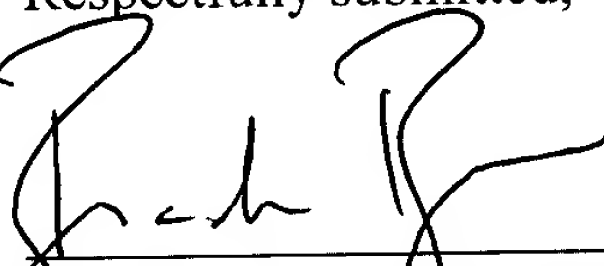
Applicant respectfully asserts that this response obviates the rejections detailed in the Office Action and that the application should be allowed.

If any additional fees are due in connection with the filing of this response, such as fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17, please charge the fees to Deposit Account No. 02-4300. Any overpayment can be credited to Deposit Account No. 02-4300.

Respectfully submitted,

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Signature:



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